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Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development

Statement submitted by the International Movement ATD Fourth World, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2007/100 and Corr.1.

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Statement

In connection with the work of the Economic and Social Council in 2007, a panel of experts met in Paris on 27 April 2007 to discuss the question "How can the development of ethics contribute to the eradication of poverty and hunger?" The panel discussion was held under the auspices of ATD Fourth World and the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (IAESCSI) and in partnership with the Ostad Elahi Foundation: Ethics and Human Solidarity, a foundation which has been approved and endorsed by the French Government. In addition to the organizing partners, the panel included participants from the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Economic and Social Council, the World Food Programme, the High Council for International Cooperation and the Impact network.

"Ethics" may be defined as the search for consistency between ideals and day-to-day action. The panel discussions enabled the participants to draw up a number of recommendations, some of which have already been translated into concrete actions or innovative pilot projects:

At the global level (international organizations, Member States etc.)

It is recommended that international organizations and Member States should:

- Promote transparency: identify and eliminate contradictory approaches and double standards. It is particularly important that the United Nations and the World Trade Organization should harmonize their approaches.

- Establish ethical parameters for consistent economic development that extend beyond cultural, philosophical and religious differences. Seek to identify common ethical standards. On that basis, establish a true education for coexistence.

- Elaborate a covenant on economic and social rights that sets out mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth. Set up effective structures (education, information, etc.) within States and develop the necessary legislative, financial and human resources.

- Rethink the ethical hypotheses and choices on which current economic growth is based, bearing in mind that they do not promote solidarity, and devise alternative development models. Strive for social sustainability and incorporate social exclusion and the link between poverty and inequality into the fight against poverty.

- Develop more appropriate economic indicators, in addition to gross national product (GNP) (Brazilian example). The poverty line was set at one dollar a day in 1985; a poverty line of around two dollars a day would reflect world poverty more accurately.

- Develop strategies for social cohesion that promote shared responsibility among the different actors (public authorities, markets, families, NGOs etc.).

- Fund experimental projects, such as platforms for political dialogue regarding ethical, people-centred initiatives to eradicate poverty and exclusion, which aim to: (1) establish different synergies from the traditional support and funding for social policies; (2) encourage debate among citizens on how to

make the public more aware of its choices and of the impact that markets have on poverty, the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations and lives in general.

- Decompartmentalize poverty eradication policies; for example, consolidate all aid services for persons overburdened with debt.

- Incorporate ethical, social and environmental criteria in the development of government procurement policies (17 per cent of Western Europe's gross domestic product (GDP)).

- Bearing in mind that the fight against poverty and the fight for human dignity are closely entwined, develop indicators of well-being that take into account rights such as the right to privacy, the right to err, the right to express one's views, the right to recognition and so forth.

- Strengthen the involvement of local communities; these can build cooperation networks by facilitating direct contact among people and can build systems that serve the public interest and meet the population's real needs. France, for example, has passed a law entitled the "Santini-Oudin Law", which allows local authorities to allocate 1 per cent of their water and sanitation budget to international development projects.

- Recognize and use the field experience of NGOs to adjust strategies and empower more people.

At the NGO level

Consistency between the day-to-day involvement of people and the activities of an organization can be achieved through shared commitment, training and provision of funds.

Progress in the fight against poverty cannot be achieved unless people are actively committed. To avoid becoming discouraged, one must like people; to like people, one must truly know them and understand their situation. NGOs should therefore:

- Build and sustain a common spirit of fellowship and a true sense of friendship through regular exchange of experiences and reflection on the commitment undertaken.

- Keep a daily written record of individual actions.

- Encourage people living in poverty to join forces with the extreme poor. Have faith in the value of all human beings, act accordingly by working with them and eliminate social exclusion, person by person. Never abandon the poor, but help them to become as self-sufficient as possible.

- Encourage individuals and families to search for ways to lift themselves out of poverty. For example, families could hold a "council of elders" to solve difficult problems.

- Regularly recruit young people with skills who are available, well-balanced, willing to work in teams and interested in helping the extremely poor.

- Adapt staff living conditions and salaries to the field situation and take into account that staff must deal with people living in extreme poverty.

- Do not solicit donations and retain the loyalty of donors by refusing to sell or exchange mailing lists.

- Do not confuse communication and information. Develop transparency and consistency.

In the media

The media play a crucial role in raising public awareness of the Millennium Development Goals. Actions could include:

- The organization of a world conference of all media and media outlets;

- More media partnerships and actions to promote international solidarity;

- Training journalists in issues relating to development and ethics.

In conclusion, there is a very close link between the way one sees the world and the way one responds to poverty and hunger. True innovative dynamism requires a sense of ethics and responsibility at every level and it is essential to implement those ethics in one's own life. Individual actors, international organizations and NGOs must all examine how they apply their own ethics in their day-to-day actions and whether they attempt "to put themselves in the place of others, at all times". A series of international panel discussions would raise public awareness of the fact that poverty eradication is the responsibility of all.

Given that women tend to be more disinterested and that they have a greater sensitivity to ethics and a stronger sense of responsibility, their increased participation in both the panel discussions and the implementation of actions could advance the fight against poverty. The accreditation of NGOs could take this criterion into account.

Notes

The following organizations associate themselves with this statement: the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions and the Ostad Elahi Foundation.

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Corrigendum

Document E/2007/NGO/9 is hereby withdrawn.

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